

Dr M: What observers will do

By Ahmad A. Talib

KUALA SUNGAI BARU, (Malacca), Tues. — The Government will not allow Election Watch to play the role of a watchdog on foreign observers invited to witness the forthcoming general election, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said the observers would have access to all facilities in the course of their work, but their operations would be confined to the forthcoming general election and not any previous polls.

Dr Mahathir conveyed these points to Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang when the DAP secretary-general met the Prime Minister at

his office yesterday.

Mr Lim had sought a meeting with Dr Mahathir to discuss certain aspects of the role of the observers in the election.

Speaking to reporters after a one-day visit to Malacca today, Dr Mahathir said Mr Lim had made certain requests on the role of the observers.

Dr Mahathir told Mr Lim that the observers were unnecessary but certain internal developments had prompted the Government to make an official request to the Commonwealth's Secretariat in London for their presence in Malaysia.

The Government agreed to have foreign observers to witness the forthcoming general election because

there were indications that some local interest groups were working to undermine the polls, Dr Mahathir said.

At yesterday's meeting, Mr Lim proposed several conditions to the Government.

But the Government would not agree to them, Dr Mahathir said without giving details of what these conditions were.

"But the observers would learn that the same campaign restrictions apply to all the political parties participating in the general election," he said.

"They will find out that we will abide by the decision of the people, as we have done in previous elections."

The Prime Minister said members of Election Watch, an interest group recently formed to supposedly monitor the coming election, have been busy abroad bad-mouthing the Government.

He said this was possibly done as "an act of revenge" because one of its members was removed from Government service.

"Against this background, I doubt if Election Watch has the right credentials to be observers to our election," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said the Commonwealth observers, while being confined to witness the polls, would not be allowed to have direct involvement in

local politics.

For instance, they would not be allowed to hear presentation from political parties or receive memorandum from them, especially when the documents or presentation are made with the intention of undermining the Government.

However, Dr Mahathir did agree with Mr Lim on one of his many requests.

The Prime Minister said members of the team will be drawn from countries practising the same system of parliamentary democracy, using a multi-party system of election.

The Prime Minister also agreed with Mr Lim that

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PM given briefing on election preparations

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the election would be "fair, free, clean and honest".

Dr Mahathir said this was nothing new to the Government because it had been "fair, free, clean and honest" in eight previous elections.

Just before the Press conference, Dr Mahathir chaired a closed-door meeting with the Malacca Umno and was given a briefing on various aspects of preparation for the election.

"The briefing was essential because we want to ensure victory for the BN," he said.

Earlier, speaking at a meet-the-people session at

Kampung Pantai, about 5km from here, the Prime Minister reminded the people to learn from history and not to repeat the mistakes made by previous leaders.

The fall of the Malacca Sultanate to foreign powers was partly due to the assistance given by traitors to their paymasters.

Such disruptive elements still existed, Dr Mahathir said, adding these "turncoats" were forever willing to abandon the country in search of personal glory, greed and blind ambition.

Later, Dr Mahathir gave a symbolic touch to a *gotong royong* house-building project in the scenic sea-

side village. He helped nail several planks to an old wooden house which was being repaired under the Government's poverty-eradication programme.

He had lunch with the people in a simple, traditional setting, with BN officials, leaders from various Umno divisions, party workers and the ordinary folk camped under makeshift tents.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Thamby Chik, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat and other State dignitaries.